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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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A-ONE #0242

10/20/00

~ Gearing Up For PSX2!! ~ People Are Talking! ~ New Sony VAIO!
~ Paperless Society? ~ MP3.com Reaches Deal! ~ AtarICQ 1.45
~ Taskbar 3 Alpha Out! ~ VMEbus Graphics Card! ~ New NED Player!
~ Quake III Dreamcast! ~ Web Filtering Softened ~ Alert Help Source!

-* Campus Crime Reports On Web! *-

-* Handspring Unveils Color Organizers *-
-* Massachusetts Requires Laptops For College *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard
"~~~~~"

"Saying it like it is!"

Very little to complain about this week! While things at work are still utterly insane, it hasn't been personally too stressful for a change. The financial picture is more bleak than usual, but that's not surprising.

When I was in Maine a couple of week's ago, my brother turned me on to a couple of web auction sites. While I was familiar with eBay, he told me about uBid also. I had never visited either, until I got back from my visit. You see, my brother has been telling me, via e-mails from my father, that he's been buying and selling items like crazy on eBay. Some of the things he's bought seem idiotic, but my brother is a flea market junkie, so a place like eBay is heaven to him! Anyway, he knew that I was considering a laptop computer (or two) and suggested I register on both sites. Warily, I did so. I did a search for laptops and looked at a few listings. When I found one I liked, and the bid range was somewhere within my reach, I bid. I probably lost out on a dozen machines after placing a single bid. Some of these auctions can go crazy! Near the end of last week, I came upon a listing which contained 10 machines being auctioned simultaneously. I figured this might be a good opportunity, so I bid. Well, uBid has an option that you can receive an e-mail notification telling you when you've made a successful bid as well as a notification when/if you've been outbid. I signed up for that option. Well, my mailbox has been busy!!

I'd get a message I was outbid, I upped my bid - over and over again. Fortunately, the bids weren't going up drastically. I kept checking the bid ranges and decided to place a bid somewhere in the middle of the 10 machines, figuring most people were bidding incrementally and I'd stand a better chance to hold on.

The auction was supposed to end last Friday, at 9:30 EST. The auction went on until past 10:45 because of last minute bids. Every time a new bid came in, the clock would be extended for 10 minutes! I was going crazy! Finally, the auction was over. I held on to the 2nd place bid; I got my laptop! I should be receiving it any day now. Should be interesting.

Now I was addicted. The next day, I decided to look and see what new machines were available. Lo and behold, there was another auction of the same machine, same exact specs, but this time there were 12 machines going! Well, I knew my wife would want a laptop, so I bid on another! I eventually made it, a little lower on the ranking. I ended up paying the same price as the initial machine! We plan to have some fun with them!

I have done some "hobby" bidding on eBay and won quite a number of auctions. Nothing extreme like a laptop, but enjoyable nonetheless. However, I think I had better not get too wrapped up in this stuff or I can end up spending a lot of money! It's fun as long as you don't get stupid and bid beyond your limits!

Until next time...

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VMEbus Graphics Card News

Dear Atari users,

Last week I got the new boards back for the VMEbus graphics/ethernet card and I have been working on it and testing it this week. So far, I have run into a small problem with a chip not operating as expected, but fortunately today I was able to find a workaround for the problem. Thus I can now say that the card in its final form is working satisfactorily.

The drivers are not finished yet and some more work is still involved, but the actual hardware is now ready and I will be able to ship the first boards very soon, with driver updates being available as soon as I have time to work on them. For now the card works only with NVDI and there is no hardware acceleration, but this will improve as I get the fVDI driver finished.

I refer above to the graphics part of the board, which is the main function. I had added ethernet functionality to the board, but I do not know how soon I will have time to properly implement this. I will have to see how things go.

Availability will be very limited at first, and in fact because of the difficulties associated with sourcing very small amounts of parts, it is a bit of a juggling act to get these cards to market at all. So there could be delays in availability when I have to get new stock etc. But they will be available, and I hope you can appreciate the difficulties associated with making such a complex device available for the small Atari market.

More information on pricing and availability will be announced in the next couple of weeks.

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Mario Becroft <mb@gem.win.co.nz> - <http://gem.win.co.nz/mario/>
Atari hardware products - 68HC08 support site

AtarICQ 0.145 Released

AtarICQ 0.145 is a "rather massive update, containing both a vastly improved interface as well as native support for MiNTnet."
<http://gokmase.atari.org>

New Version of NED PLAYER

NED PLAYER is now the only one sound player on ATARI scene that can play ADPCM packed files directly from disc. And more it is even possible to do this on a slow 8Mhz STE. Standard (STE/TT/FALCON) version and FALCON only version are available at new address: <http://new-design.atari.org>. Please change your links!

Alert Help 2.2/Source Code Released

Alert Help has been updated to version 2.2: Improvements include iconify support, a GEMScript bug fix and few cosmetic changes. The program now uses faceVALUE3.

Source codes for Alert Help, NervBox, Equation Calculation and Lotto have been released. Please note that only the "USERWORK" part (and the HRD/FVC file) of the source is included so you will need faceVALUE 3 to generate a working GFA file.

<http://www.atari-web.de/users/mjaap/prg/>

Taskbar 3 Alpha Release

An alpha version of Taskbar 3 is available. For more information:

<http://atari.nvg.org/taskbar/>

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I don't know about you, but I've been going nuts the past few weeks. Things are busy (absolutely insane, truth be told) at work, both my wife and myself have had killer colds, and my ISP has decided to start randomly dropping connections.

Just another week in paradise, I guess.

Y'know, I usually don't mention elections except to say "get out there and vote", but I figure what the heck... I need to vent about SOMETHING!

After watching all three of the presidential debates (and after screaming into a throw pillow throughout), I was almost completely disappointed in the substance of the debates. After a little bit of thought, I came up with MY version of the way the debates should have gone. Please understand that, even though I believe in everyone's right to their own beliefs, that does not extend to fictional exchanges such as this. That being the case, I'd recommend that republicans

fast-forward through this. <grin> Of course, there will be some shots to the other side as well.

The 2000 Presidential Debate. Joe-ville, USA
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Moderator: Welcome to the fourth and final debate. The first question is for Vice President Gore.

Mr. Gore. If elected, what are your plans with respect to the internet?

Gore: I'm glad you asked that. Since I invented the internet eight years ago, it's grown by leaps and bounds. But as I'm sure you know, things have to keep growing or they die.

I've recently become a grandfather, and I think that the time has come for me, as the father of the internet, to become a grandfather again when the internet itself gives birth.

Moderator: Governor Bush, you may now reply.

Bush: I'm just an average guy. I hear all the same things the rest of you hear about the internet... the in-fighting, the backstabbing, and the screaming and crying fits and the pleas for leniency...

Oh wait, that's Friday nights at the governor's mansion.

Anyway, the internet wasn't invented in Texas, so it's got to be bad.

Moderator: Mr. Bush. How would you handle the current stock market problems?

Bush: That's easy. I own a couple of stock yards, so I know all about that. Y'see, first you have to brand 'em. Then you let 'em graze for a couple of months on government-owned land, then you find some overseas guy who's willing to pay through the nose for 'em.

Moderator: Mr. Gore. You may now reply.

Gore: The current stock market situation is very serious. That's why I spear-headed legislation to stop this horrible, wasteful misuse of the internet. That's why I want to be president.

Moderator: You each now have one minute to tell people about your qualifications. Mr Gore, you're up first.

Gore: I've been in public service for more than twenty years. That's where I invented the internet.

Under my opponent's plan we'd all still be counting on calculators and using ATM machines and buying airline tickets

at the counter.

These are very trying times, and what we need now is someone who knows how to get things done. I've never actually been president, but I've been watching closely for the past eight years and, except for the "intern" stuff, I think I can do it.

Moderator: Mr. Bush?

Bush: My father used to be president. Y'know, in some european countries it's still the custom for sons to take over for their fathers when they stop being leaders. So I don't know why we even have to have elections. I'm the kind of person who brings people together. I've always been able to make people's lives easier. Take health care, for instance. That's easy to simplify. If you can't afford health care, you don't have to worry about what it's going to cover.

I've always been able to get along with people. Not like my opponent over there... that boring geek....

Gore: Hey George! (Puts finger to one nostril and inhales sharply)

Bush: That's it, computer boy! (Pulls jacket off and steps toward Gore).

Moderator: Ladies and gentlemen...
LET'S GET READY TO RUMMMMMBBBBLLLLLLLLLEEEE!

The scene takes on a Doom-esque quality as both Gore and Bush suddenly find high-tech laser rifles on their arms. A feral growl is heard in the distance and both candidates jockey for cover and a good firing position.

Meanwhile, a diminutive figure emerges from the behind the stage and looks furtively from side to side as he approaches the podium.

Newcomer: Hi there. Now that there's some free air time, let me re-introduce myself. I'm Ross Perot and here's the deal...

Okay, enough silliness. Let's get to the REAL news from the UseNet.

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
=====

Jared Falvo asks about his newly acquired 1040:

"I have the opportunity to buy a 1040ST for \$5.50 (US dollars). It doesn't have a monitor or mouse. What I need to know is, are there mods available to make the 1040ST usable (in color modes) with an SVGA monitor, like my 15" Sony E100. As well, is there a way to reroute the wiring in a two-button PC serial mouse to make it work with the 1040ST?

I know that they say that the monitor has to be able to do 15Hz Horizontal in order to do color modes (the lowest mine goes is 30Hz), but is there any way to accelerate the horizontal signal from the 1040ST so that it can

display color modes at 30Hz?

As well, I'm debating as to a system design challenge... attempt to build an ST that is 100% optimized (maximum RAM, maximum video output hardware, etc.) I want to see if we can't build a system that can do the Internet smoothly, based less on a fast CPU and mainly on an awesome video and motherboard subsystem. Of course, the OS (TOS/GEM) might get in the way of that, but... surely it must be possible if someone tries hard enough.

Milan II may be dead, but why not have fun reinventing the old 8MHz 68000 ST's into a maximized system for the loyal masses! Hmm?"

"Hellraiser" tells Jared:

"As far as I am aware, it is possible to use a conventional serial mouse with an ST, so long as you have the requisite software. As for hooking it up to your monitor, there is no way u can connect it directly to a VGA monitor that I know of, but if u have a TV card in your PC, you could construct a lead to go from the monitor out on the ST and connecting the composite video out to the video in on the TV card. As for sound, just route that from the monitor port to the sound input on your PC - voila, instant ST on PC monitor."

Jared replies to Hellraiser:

"Which is why I was saying, is there a way of *accelerating* the signal (frequency) from the ST video out so that it CAN do color on an SVGA monitor. Sort of like translating the signal so that the ST is still outputting 15Hz, but the monitor is getting 30Hz. Or maybe it can be done the other way around... or something."

David Wade jumps in and adds another possibility:

"Yes its quite simple. All you do is take one common or garden IBM clone. I usually use a AMD K6 based machine, with Windows98. Into this machine insert common or garden WIn TV card or similar. Our local computer fair usually has 2nd user cards for 15 UK Pounds, or about 10 dollars.

Install card in PC and connect composite out from Atari into PC card.

Bingo, you can now use ST on PC monitor. Computer card digitizes Atari Output, and then speeds it up into a form suitable for display on PC monitor.

..... Or perhaps that's not what the person had in mind.

It does work, but its really only good for low res."

Claes Holmerup adds:

"You can't make it work other than in monochrome mode on an SVGA, since the frequency's wrong. With an old Multisync going down to 15kHz - or an old Amiga monitor, it would have worked. A SCART cable to your TV could also be an option...

There is possibility to connect a PC mouse to the serial port, using a program to make the adaption - but some programs don't accept that solution, so they won't work. Mario Becroft's mouse interface works perfectly and is always compatible since the PC mouse plugs into the

original mouse port via the interface."

Jared asks Claes:

"I just thought of something, but I need someone with technical know-how to confirm if it's possible..."

The 1040ST monitor out has a Composite Video pin as well as R G and B (plus syncs of H and V), etc. My brother seems to think that you could easily connect the Atari ST to a A/V-capable TV (you know, the TV's that sport the Yellow (Video), Red and White (left and right audio) RCA plugs) by just using the Composite Video pin, plus Ground.

Is it that simple? If so, how good (or bad) does low res look on a TV?

Is there an way to simply "hardwire" (tying the pins together) a series of pins together on the port to get different kinds of video output? If so, what kinds of video output is possible with the 1040ST?

I'm hoping for a reply before 4pm tomorrow (Saturday), so I can decide whether or not I should get the 1040ST."

Steve Sweet tells Jared:

"It's that simple, ready made cables are available for this. You'll get ST-low and ST-Mid resolutions."

Ken MacDonald asks about an internal drive for a TT:

"I am helping out a friend (Aage Nielsen, exec member at large of TAF) install an extra SCSI drive on his TT.

Rather than go to the effort and extra expense of using the external SCSI port, I thought of just adding the second drive to his internal SCSI cable. We can take out the existing cable and replace it with one that can accept two drives, the cable is long enough to go out the back to the second drive, and provide power to the second drive.

My question is can we have 2 SCSI drives on the internal SCSI bus? Can they be separate SCSI ids (i.e. 0 and 1) or can they have the same SCSI id, but different LUNs (i.e. LUN 0 and LUN 1)"

Dr. Uwe Seimet tells Ken:

"Yes, sure. The internal bus is not really different from the external bus. It's just on the opposite side of the cabled, that's all.

You have to use different SCSI IDs, just like with external drives. You can't use different LUNs with hard disk drives except with hard disk drives where one controller on the drive controls more than one drive. I don't know any SCSI hard disk drive where this is the case."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. I'm going to start telling you now so that you don't forget... REGISTER TO VOTE... and then VOTE! It's not just a privilege, it's a responsibility. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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A Fleeting Chance to Bid For an Xbox

Although gamers are already bidding up this year's hard-to-find holiday gift, Sony's PlayStation 2, there is a brief chance to snag what could be next year's hot item: Microsoft's Xbox.

The Redmond, Wash.-based software giant has donated a half-dozen of the units to a video-game industry charity auction on Amazon.com.

Winners won't get the game console until it starts shipping next fall. But in the meantime, they will have a hand-signed certificate from Bill Gates assuring that they will be one of the first with the console.

Several auctions are under way, with bids ranging from about \$400 to more than \$600. One unit already sold for \$2,550, although that included the leather Xbox jacket that Bill Gates wore when he announced the console.

The auctions run through Friday.

Microsoft has not announced pricing for the Xbox but has said the console will be competitive with other game machines on the market.

Nintendo donated to the charity auction a Game Cube and a tour of its studios. Sony chipped in two PlayStation 2 units to the auction, which benefits the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and is sponsored by the Interactive Digital Software Association.

Meanwhile, in unrelated auctions on eBay, bids for PlayStation 2 units are already topping \$550. The console is set to go on sale Oct. 26 for a suggested price of \$299. However, Sony has chopped in half the number of units it expects to ship at launch, adding fuel to already strong demand.

Although no consumers or retailers have the U.S. version of the consoles in their hands yet, those who claim they'll have them on launch day are putting the PlayStation 2 units up for auction.

An auction on Amazon in July for the first New Internet Computers, with a

certificate signed by company chief executive Larry Ellison, fetched \$1,850 apiece for machines that normally sell for \$199 plus the cost of a monitor.

Fox Interactive Unleashes Alien Resurrection
to Stores Nationwide

Gamers looking to test their nerve this Halloween can find spine-tingling terror in Fox Interactive's new game Alien Resurrection for PlayStation.

This action/adventure title combines advanced first-person gameplay technology and translates the adrenaline-pumping excitement of the film with swarming Aliens, movie-quality sound and advanced special effects.

"Alien Resurrection utilizes unique camera angles and Dolby Surround Sound creating one of our most technologically innovative PlayStation games to date," said Karly Young, Director of Marketing, Fox Interactive. "With the movie, you watch the action; in the game, you live it. We've taken the terror and excitement of the Alien franchise to a new level."

Inspired by the feature film, Alien Resurrection is a fast-paced game that combines a variety of problem solving, strategy and hard-core action elements creating a challenging action/adventure experience. Players explore 10 colossal levels featuring multiple walkways, galleries, rooms and underwater areas. As Ripley, Call, DiStefano and Christie, players utilize all of the memorable weapons from the Alien world including the Pulse Rifle, Flamethrower, Electric Gun and Grenade Launcher.

Like its film counterpart, Alien Resurrection utilizes sophisticated artificial intelligence allowing Aliens to move fluidly between floors, walls and ceilings and communicate telepathically in order to stalk, swarm and decimate their prey using multiple attacks. The game also mimics actual elements from the film. For example, Alien Queens lay eggs that hatch facehuggers. Facehuggers enter human chests and chest-bursters grow into Alien Warriors, who collect human hosts.

The game features a full 360-degree, first-person 3D polygonal engine with real-time lighting, stunning visual effects and a destructible, interactive environment. The film's Oscar-nominated design team created the title's digital sound effects and ambient background audio.

Alien Resurrection was developed by Argonaut Games and has an ESRB rating of "M" - Mature. The game is available nationwide at a suggested retail price of \$29.99.

Sega Unleashes Quake III Arena On Dreamcast
for Its Console Debut

For the First Time Ever, Dreamcast and PC Users
Will be Able to Compete Against Each Other in
Legendary Online Multiplayer Game

Gamers will be quaking in their boots now that id Software's QUAKE III Arena is making its console debut! Sega of America, Inc. unleashed

QUAKE III Arena for the 128-bit, Internet-ready Sega Dreamcast videogame console. Taking the legendary QUAKE franchise to the next level of first-person action, QUAKE III Arena allows Dreamcast and PC gamers to test their mettle against each other via SegaNet, the only high-speed online console gaming network. QUAKE III Arena for Dreamcast includes all new arenas, an exciting new quad-screen mode and advanced artificial intelligence (AI) that will challenge even the most experienced QUAKE fans with opponents so smart they are almost human! QUAKE III Arena was developed, under id Software's supervision and direction, by Raster Productions for Dreamcast and published by Sega of America under license from Activision.

In QUAKE III Arena, players prowl through 30 deadly arenas, including 14 designed exclusively for Dreamcast. Using a first person perspective, gamers set out on a search-and-destroy mission to establish which warrior has the ultimate survivor skills. This fight to the death competition between gladiators transpires in settings so real, it is sure to harvest a new generation of QUAKE fans. Gamers are challenged to compete in multiple game types including Capture the Flag, 1-on-1 Tournament, Team Deathmatch, and the ultimate free-for-all fight for "frag" points, Deathmatch.

"QUAKE III Arena marks a first in videogame history -- console and PC gamers have never been given the opportunity to battle over the Internet in real-time, a feature which is now made possible only in QUAKE III Arena via SegaNet," said Scott Hawkins, senior producer, Sega of America. "QUAKE III Arena combines all the heart-pounding action that fans have come to expect from the QUAKE series and brings exciting new features and intense environments to Dreamcast."

"With the release of QUAKE III Arena for the Dreamcast, console gamers can now experience the same frenetic, in-your-face gameplay of the legendary PC version," said Todd Hollenshead, CEO, id Software. "Look for Internet competition to heat up this fall as a new generation of QUAKE III Arena fans join the fray online."

QUAKE III Arena comes armed with multiple weapons, tons of characters and an exciting array of gameplay options. Gamers can compete against computer-controlled gladiators in the single-player mode, or test their valor against human opponents either across the country or in the same room. QUAKE III Arena features exclusive multiplayer modes, where up to four players can battle on the same Dreamcast via split screen, or from four different corners of the country over the Internet.

QUAKE III Arena supports the standard Dreamcast controller and is completely customizable. Players can save their progress, awards and game configurations to the Visual Memory Unit (VMU), to use with any Dreamcast unit. For old school QUAKE fans, the game also supports a Dreamcast keyboard and mouse as well as the Jump Pack for force feedback effects. Players with broadband access can be fragging faster than ever with full support for the Dreamcast Broadband Adapter (sold separately.)

To play QUAKE III Arena online, gamers simply place the game in their Dreamcast, select Internet Game on the title screen, and hit dial. The Dreamcast will then provide a list of available QUAKE III Arena games to join. Players without an Internet Service Provider (ISP) will receive 50 free hours when they simply plug a phone line into their Dreamcast and sign up with Sega.net through the QUAKE III Arena interface. QUAKE III Arena is rated "M" for Mature and is available for \$49.95 at retailers nationwide and at www.sega.com.

Interplay Ships Wild Wild Racing for PlayStation2

Interplay Entertainment Corp. announced that the company's first PlayStation2 title, Wild Wild Racing, will begin shipping to retail. Developed exclusively for the PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system, Wild Wild Racing allows players to compete in all-terrain vehicle races in various countries around the globe. Developed by Rage Software, Wild Wild Racing will be available at retail for the North American PlayStation 2 launch on October 26.

"We are very excited to have Wild Wild Racing shipping at the PlayStation 2 launch," said Brian Fargo, CEO of Interplay Entertainment. "Wild Wild Racing takes advantage of the advanced capabilities of the PlayStation 2 and furthers our commitment to develop and publish great console product."

Wild Wild Racing will feature five race locations: USA, India, Iceland, Mexico and Australia and utilizes the advanced PlayStation 2 graphic technology which allows for varied weather conditions, as well as, day and evening racing. Players will "strap into" one of nine specially designed off-road vehicles, with multiple upgrades and a total of 22 different handling models. PlayStation 2 owners will scramble up steep mountain passes, "kick up dust" in hot desert sands, while experiencing one of the most exciting off road games ever produced.

In addition to the main off-road race circuit, Wild Wild Racing includes a series of special challenge features that allow the player to upgrade and access new vehicles. The game also features exhibition races and time trial modes, along with exciting new challenge modes including "Quest," "Skill" and the highflying "Stunt" mode which is the ultimate test as players launch into death-defying maneuvers.

Midway Defies Gravity With Rollcage Stage 2 for the Playstation Game Console

Midway Games Inc. announced that Rollcage Stage 2 for the PlayStation game console has shipped to retail.

Building on the popularity of the original game, Rollcage Stage 2 allows players to race indestructible cars in a destructible world while battling opponents by taking shortcuts off walls, on ceilings and through tunnels. In a 360-degree world of go-anywhere racing, Rollcage Stage 2 unleashes thrilling tracks at breakneck speeds.

"Rollcage Stage 2 is a racing game for core fans of speed and destruction," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. "The new additions and features make this version of Rollcage the ultimate combat racing videogame."

With 65 tracks, 20 cars, 16 different game modes, five multi-player games, 12 weapons and added enticements, Rollcage Stage 2 features 60 percent more content and 15 more game modes than the original Rollcage. New dynamics ensure against annoying spin-outs and improve overall handling of vehicles.

Rollcage Stage 2 Key Features

- Sixty-five racing tracks
- Twenty different cars
- Twelve weapons with added enticements
- New handling - no annoying spin-outs
- 60 percent bigger game with 15 new game modes

Infogrames, Inc. Puts Gamers Behind the Wheel of
the World's Top Licensed Rally Cars With Test
Drive V-Rally for Sega Dreamcast--In Stores This
Week

Infogrames, Inc. announced that Test Drive V-Rally for Sega Dreamcast is shipping to stores this week. Developed by Eden Studios, the game features 16 licensed cars racing on 84 tracks in 12 countries.

''Test Drive V-Rally is a rally racing fan's dream come true,'' said Laddie Ervin, director of marketing for sports and racing at Infogrames, Inc. ''With its outstanding graphics at 60 frames per second, life-like physics, and a top of the line track editor, Test Drive V-Rally blows the competition away.'' The renowned V-Rally formula is a welcome addition to the multimillion unit selling Test Drive franchise. Test Drive V-Rally offers the exciting racing tempo and variety of dream cars that stay true to the Test Drive series, while also providing a superior rally racing game with outstanding graphics and gameplay.

Test Drive V-Rally offers more than 16 officially licensed 1999 World Rally Cars and 10 classic rallying cars, including Subaru Impreza, Skoda Octavia, Ford Focus, Toyota Corolla and the Mitsubishi Lancer.

The game captures the essence of rally racing by recreating the car physics and environments that real rally drivers encounter. With more than 200 miles of road in twelve different countries, players will find themselves negotiating short cuts, double road super stages and cross roads throughout the game, while cars will suffer progressive car damage and accumulate dirt. Test Drive V-Rally offers in-car pilot animations and the game can be played from a dashboard view with driver shifting and steering animation.

In addition to the game's 84 existing tracks, Test Drive V-Rally's dynamic track editor/generator lets players design their own tracks and change them on the fly, giving them virtually endless possibilities to customize the game. Track editing options allow players to create or edit turns, inclines, terrain and weather conditions, while also letting them choose a point to point or closed loop track. The track editor allows the player to fine tune different aspects of the track, and, after creating a track, the player may go back and make turns sharper or straighter in very fine increments.

In addition to designing tracks, Test Drive V-Rally also gives the player control of several mechanical aspects of their car to improve performance in certain environments. The player must choose strategically from the options in the Car Settings mode:

- * Suspension: hard suspension is better for asphalt while soft is better for rough terrain.
- * Car Height: if it's going to be uneasy terrain, raise that car up!
- * Over/Understeer: a track with gentle bends requires an understeering

car while tight turns require an oversteering car.

- * Brakes: brakes can be made harder or softer and can be adjusted front to back. There is also a brake assist option.

Test Drive V-Rally features two, three and four-player split screen modes and will be available at most major retail outlets for an estimated retail price of \$29.99. For more information visit the Test Drive V-Rally Web site at <http://www.us.infogrames.com>.

Infogrames, Inc. Stretches the Boundaries With Test Drive Off-Road-Wide Open for the PlayStation 2 Computer Entertainment System

The Illustrious Off-Road Racing Franchise Turns Over A New Leaf With A New Developer And Sprawling ``Go Anywhere" Environments

Infogrames, Inc. announced that the newest installment in the Test Drive Off-Road series, Test Drive Off-Road-Wide Open, is in development for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. Developed by Angel Studios, the game takes off-road racing to a new level with 16 licensed off-roading vehicles and more than 30 wide open tracks. The game will be available in summer 2001.

``With the technical advancements allowed by the PlayStation 2, this new addition to the Test Drive Off-Road family will go beyond what any off-road game has accomplished before," said Chris Downend, director of product development for racing titles at Infogrames, Inc. ``Players will have room to roam in the "go anywhere" environment. Racing freely through expansive real-world locations that are graphically magnificent and true-to-life in some of the world's most desirable off-road vehicles will make this one of the first must-have racing games for PlayStation 2."

Responsible for such hits as Midtown Madness and Resident Evil 2, Angel Studios is recognized as one of the top game developers in the industry. As one of the pioneers of pre-rendered computer graphics for films, TV commercials and cinematics for games, Angel Studios strives to give gameplay fewer limitations and more options by developing the most advanced technology in the industry.

``We are excited about using our technology to work on a franchise with such a great pedigree," said Clinton Keith, director of product development at Angel Studios. ``Test Drive Off-Road-Wide Open incorporates amazing graphics and superior driving physics with the concept of creating wide open, sprawling environments that won't limit gameplay to a track-which, after all, is the appeal of off-roading."

Setting the stage as the three real-world locations in Test Drive Off-Road-Wide Open are Moab, Utah; Yosemite, California and the Big Island of Hawaii. Chosen for their diversity in textures and environments as well as their reputations for extreme off-road racing, these three locations will be the backdrop for an intensely expansive racing experience.

Within each of the games' three locations, there will be eight to ten tracks including circuit courses and A to B races. All tracks will be styled in a ``go-anywhere" environment with variations in track sizes and styles. The player will have the freedom to choose the path that is best suited to their truck while attempting to complete the course in the fastest time possible.

Test Drive Off-Road-Wide Open offers a variety of licensed off-road vehicles that are completely customizable, with each offering its own unique handling. Some of the licensed vehicles include AM General Humvee and AM General Hummer, Jeep Wrangler, Ford F150, Ford Bronco, DodgeRAM 2500, Dodge and Shelby Durango. Vehicles are completely customizable with a paint job option and upgrades (including tires, wheels, light bars, brush guards, lift kits and more). Each vehicle upgrade produces a visual change in the appearance and performance of the vehicle and all upgrades emphasize fun gameplay.

Test Drive Off-Road Wide Open for PlayStation 2 will feature a licensed soundtrack and will reach most major retail stores in summer 2001.

Take a Ride on the Wild Side With Midway's
Cruis'n Exotica for Nintendo 64 and Game Boy
Color

Midway Games Inc. announced that Cruis'n Exotica for Nintendo 64 ships to retail and Cruis'n Exotica for Game Boy Color will ship to retail on Oct. 31.

Cruis'n Exotica for the arcade was successfully released this spring. An international and intergalactic racing adventure, the Cruis'n franchise has sold 1.9 million units to date on the Nintendo 64.

Cruis'n Exotica takes players through exotic locales in a variety of venues. The game features three different modes, all new cars and 14 tracks set in "out-of-this world" locations. Players can visit the primitive jungles of the Amazon, the busy streets of Hong Kong, lush Irish landscapes, the lost ocean city of Atlantis and the planet Mars.

"The Cruis'n franchise has been extremely successful and continues to bring the excitement of its arcade games to home console systems," said Helene Sheeler, vice president of marketing, Midway. "The Cruis'n Exotica designers traveled the globe collecting video footage of exotic locales, which they turned into incredibly sharp 3D images using Midway's state-of-the-art reality mapping technology."

Nintendo 64 Key Features

- * Thirty exotic vehicles including 12 default and 18 secret
- * Twelve new tracks with a total of 48 variations
- * Amazingly vibrant graphics with incredible lighting and environmental mapping
- * Tracks ranging from Korea, Atlantis, Las Vegas, Hong Kong, Alaska, India, Holland, Ireland, The Amazon, Tibet and Mars
- * Multiple game modes -- Cruis'n Exotica (arcade), Cruis'n Freestyle (practice) and new Cruis'n Challenge
- * Extras -- game enhancement, shortcuts, secret vehicles, turbo boost, fancy driving stunts, drag-race mode, nitros and more
- * Utilizes all supported peripherals such as the Rumble Pak and the ability to save the game to a Battery Pack

Game Boy Color Key Features

- * Thirteen new vehicles

- * Multiple game modes -- Cruis'n Exotica (arcade), Cruis'n Freestyle (practice) and new Cruis'n Challenge
- * Amazingly vibrant graphics use lighting effects and environmental mapping
- * Tracks ranging from Korea, Atlantis, Las Vegas, Hong Kong, Alaska, India, Holland, Ireland, Amazon, Tibet and Mars

EA Ships Madden NFL 2001 for the PlayStation 2
Early to Satisfy Public Demand

In response to consumer outcry, Electronic Arts shipped Madden NFL 2001 for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system one week prior to the launch date of the actual hardware units. With anticipation for the game running at a fever pitch, Electronic Arts made the decision to get the game on store shelves now to satisfy customer demand. Madden NFL 2001 is already available for the PlayStation, PC and Nintendo 64, and will be out next month on the Game Boy Color.

The PlayStation 2 console game provides a look that is so advanced many people confuse it with television. "I see myself run in Madden NFL 2001 and it looks so real that it seems like I'm watching actual game tapes from Sunday afternoon," said All-Pro running back for the Tennessee Titans, Eddie George. "With the new body and face mapping technology that EA SPORTS is using, you can look through my facemask and see that it's actually me under the helmet. It's incredible!"

In addition to recreating the players in the game in amazing detail, for the first time ever in a video football game Madden NFL 2001 incorporates coaches into the mix with the NFL Coaches Club license. Now NFL coaches such as the Denver Broncos' Mike Shanahan, Miami Dolphins' Dave Wannstedt, Pittsburgh Steelers' Bill Cowher, and Washington Redskins' Norv Turner, are seen pacing the sidelines and encouraging players. The Madden producers scanned the faces of the coaches and recorded their voices to ensure that they were portrayed in the game as realistically as the players were. EA also worked with the coaches to create unique signature plays for each team.

New in this year's game are player models that show a whole new level of detail. Wristbands, visors, facemasks, turf tape and elbow pads all exist in the game, and are player specific so that each player has the same equipment in the game that they use in the real NFL.

Always a leader in the area of realistic gameplay, the weight and height of each player is now factored into collisions to help determine how much ground a ball carrier gains as the tackle is made. A small defensive back will have a tough time knocking down a big, bruising fullback. On the flip side, the lighter and quicker wide receivers will be able to shake a linebacker during a pass route if the linebacker is forced to cover the receiver. If the offense floods a zone and sends more receivers into an area on the field than the defense has defensive backs to cover them, big gains can occur.

"Madden on the PlayStation 2 represents the pinnacle of video game football," said Steven Chiang, executive producer for the Madden franchise. "EA has been making Madden football since 1989, so when you combine all the gameplay experience we've gained over that time with the incredible new graphics capabilities of the PlayStation 2 it's a dream come

true for video football fans."

As opposed to having to search for secret codes that will unlock parts of the game, Madden players will now be able to enjoy the satisfaction of actually working to gain these special perks. In Madden NFL 2001, EA brings the concept of interactive trading cards to a video game. It is now possible to collect "'Madden Cards" in the game by performing certain tasks, and to trade or risk Madden Cards with friends via memory card. Cards unlock legendary teams, players, stadiums, and can boost player ratings.

In the past, Madden games have only contained players currently active in the league, but now Madden NFL 2001 has hundreds of the greatest NFL players from the past. Also included are all the All-Madden teams that John has picked since 1984, as well as the All-Super Bowl and Millennium teams.

Madden NFL 2001 for the PlayStation 2 console is rated "'E" (Everyone) by the ESRB. It is analog controller compatible and supports up to eight players.

EA Games "'Shakes, Not Stirs" the Delivery of
The World Is Not Enough, the Highly Anticipated
First Person James Bond Action Game

Fans of the world's most renowned top secret agent rejoice... Bond is back! Armchair espionage is taken to new heights with the highly anticipated release from Electronic Arts of The World is Not Enough for the Nintendo 64. Shortly following will be the PlayStation game console version in early November. This first person action title, based on the Eon Productions & MGM blockbuster 007 film of the same name, provides players the opportunity to once again moonlight as the super-spy. Both titles will be released under the new EA GAMES brand.

The World is Not Enough for the N64 and the PlayStation stays true to the Bond legacy by delivering all the action, stealth, state-of-the art gadgets and sophisticated spy-craft that Bond fans expect. Building upon the intense movie storyline, players assume the role of James Bond and must progress through a series of challenging mission-based levels, while confronting treacherous movie villains like Electra and Renard. In the game, Bond also encounters recognizable allies such as Christmas Jones and is helped by Q's new assistant R, played in the film by John Cleese, who also lends his voice to the game.

Each game is designed to take advantage of the strengths of the platform for which it was developed. For example, the PlayStation version of The World is Not Enough, with its streaming video capability, uses actual action footage from the film to help drive the story. The Nintendo 64 version offers a deep multiplayer capability along with massive amounts of storage space for added graphics and visual effects.

About the Nintendo 64 Version

The World is Not Enough carries the unique distinction of being the official next Bond-licensed game for the N64 system. The title features a completely new, robust game engine that can maintain crisp graphics at a constantly high frame rate for fast, fluid gameplay as well as contain hundreds of lines of spoken dialogue. This feature-packed version offers a

total of 28 single and multiplayer levels, more than 40 Q-lab weapons and gadgets - some of which are N64 exclusive. In addition, there are several N64-only missions, multiplayer arenas, and modes. The World is Not Enough for the N64 supports up to four players and four artificially intelligent (AI) bots on fast split-screen action in multiplayer mode. The game supports but does not require the Expansion Pak for added graphic enhancements.

The World is Not Enough for the N64 was developed by Eurocom Entertainment Software.

About the PlayStation Version

The World is Not Enough for the PlayStation will debut an improved graphics engine from the previous third-person perspective 007 game, the wildly successful Tomorrow Never Dies, that can render the most rich, highly detailed environment possible for the system. The game features 11 challenging single player levels - including a unique Casino level in which players must use their skills, or quickly learn, the game of BlackJack in order to acquire winnings and complete the mission objectives. Overall, the game features more than 30-Q lab weapons and gadgets, including a PlayStation exclusive video camera that doubles as a missile launcher. Also included is a revamped precision targeting system for pinpoint accuracy when using a weapon and/or gadget, and over 300 new motion-captured animations.

The World is Not Enough for the PlayStation was developed by veteran game developer Black Ops Entertainment

Both versions of The World is Not Enough carry an ESRB rating of ``T" (Teen). The N64 game will carry a MSRP of \$49.95 while the PlayStation will be \$44.95. Consumers may purchase the game directly at the EA Store SM (<http://www.eastore.ea.com>) or by calling EA Direct Sales at 1.877.324.2637. EA GAMES plans to release The World is Not Enough for the PlayStation 2 and PC in 2001. More information on the James Bond games can be found on the Electronic Arts product web site at: <http://007.ea.com>.

The games based on The World is Not Enough will mark the first projects to come out of an exclusive licensing deal EA secured with MGM Interactive, Danjaq LLC and Eon Productions for the highly coveted Bond franchise. Under the agreement, as previously announced, EA has secured the worldwide, multi-year rights to develop, publish and distribute worldwide a series of interactive titles on multiple platforms based on the James Bond character.

James Bond was first introduced to movie audiences in 1962 when Danjaq, LLC and United Artists, released Dr. No. The Bond films are one of the most valuable franchises in film history. More information about the films can be found on the official James Bond web site from MGM at: www.jamesbond.com, or at the Danjaq site at: www.007.com.

EA Ships Critically Acclaimed New Snowboarding Game SSX for the PlayStation 2

Electronic Arts shipped what many in the industry consider the ``must have" game of the year for the PlayStation2 computer entertainment system. SSX, a new snowboarding game, creates a new genre of video game based on the extreme sport Boardercross. It combines high-speed snowboard racing with

insane big air tricks on what is best described as an exaggerated snow covered motocross track. This new gameplay formula is winning over some of the harshest videogame critics in the business.

In the September 15 issue of Game Business magazine, eight of the top editor-in-chiefs from video game magazines and websites were polled on what they thought the top game, or games, would be for the PlayStation 2 console launch. SSX was the only game picked by all eight editors as a "must have" game. The editors included Chris Slate from PSM, Doug Perry from IGNPS2.com, Chris Charla from Total Games, Joe Funk from EGM, Tom Russo from Next Generation, John Davison from OPM, Dave Halverson from Gamers' Republic and Frank O'Connor from DailyRadar.com. High praise such as "a fresh look at snowboarding," "glorious-looking" and "amazing gameplay" were prevalent throughout the editors' comments.

Three different gameplay modes will allow riders to test their skills in a variety of exciting boarding events. Feel like brushing up on some tricks and generally goofing off? Freeride is the way to go. Does a quick competition sound good? Single Event is the answer. World Circuit is a season long fight for glory. Riders must progress through an array of different events, ultimately leading up to the Championship Invitational Event.

Matching the fast paced action of SSX is the game's soundtrack. Mix Master Mike of the Beastie Boys and Rahzel of the Roots recorded the game's theme song in their first joint recording at Electronic Arts' state-of-the-art recording studio in Vancouver, B.C. One key element of the soundtrack is variety as the soundtrack in SSX is totally interactive with the gameplay. As a rider pulls off one big trick after another, the pace of the music will keep up, providing an original musical score every time.

"What's exciting about SSX is it has no rules, no boundaries, and no limit on the fun," said executive producer, Steve Rechtschaffner. "If you want to go off the course then you can. If you want to try a shortcut, you can. If you want to create your own stunts and tricks, you can. The amount of freedom this game provides is amazing and the feedback we've gotten is it's exactly what the gaming public has been looking for in a PlayStation 2 game."

Eight different SSX courses stretch the barriers of reality and provide a wide-array of challenges for the beginner to expert boarder. Want to burn down an iceberg in the South Pacific? SSX offers the "Aloha Ice Jam" venue, which is an iceberg towed into an island port for the purpose of being carved up by snowboards. What about tearing it up on a virtual pinball machine-type mountain? SSX has that too in the "Tokyo Megaplex," where boarders must maneuver through moving ramps, flippers, opening and closing doors, all set in an exaggerated version of Japan's indoor snowboard parks. In "Mercury City Meltdown" boarders race through a big city after a monster snowstorm, crashing through office windows only to exit on the other side of the building, as well as dodging taxicabs and leaping entire buildings during tricks and stunts.

In order to participate in any of this mind-boggling action the player must first choose one of the eight International racers to strap onto the board and do their bidding down the mountain. Each character is completely unique, with its own specialties. Pull tricks and big air to fill your Adrenaline Bar, but be careful not to let it run out, or you will likely be found facedown in the snow and out of the race.

SSX for the PlayStation 2 console is rated "E" (Everyone) by the ESRB. It

is analog controller compatible and supports up to eight players.

EA Jumps to an Early Lead On PlayStation 2

Six Games Available in Stores On October 26

Electronic Arts announced that six EA PlayStation2 titles have rolled off the manufacturing line and are en route to retail stores nationwide. EA will have the largest number of PlayStation 2 games at the launch of Sony's next generation system on October 26, 2000. The company expects to have an additional 4-6 titles on store shelves in time for the holiday season.

"It's the software that will define the success of PlayStation 2," said Don Mattrick, president of EA Worldwide Studios. "Madden football and SSX snowboarding are the games that will show consumers what PlayStation 2 can do. Our studios have been working for over a year to ensure that consumers have the very best software when they buy a PlayStation 2. This is the strongest launch in EA's history - no other developer has this many AAA titles ready for PlayStation 2."

The following PlayStation 2 titles will be available at retail on October 26:

Madden NFL 2001 - Madden NFL 2001 has all the current teams and players, as well as hundreds of the greatest NFL warriors from the past. Three-dimensional digital face mapping technology is utilized for players and coaches alike to create an incredibly good looking and authentic game.

SSX - Based on the new extreme Boardercross sport, SSX combines high-speed snowboard racing with insane big-air tricks. SSX, which is drawing rave reviews from the game industry press, is predicted to be the first worldwide hit on PlayStation 2.

NHL2001 - NHL 2001 brings fans out of the stands and onto the ice with incredibly realistic graphics and amazingly smooth gameplay. NHL 2001 features all the current NHL players and teams, including the Minnesota Wild and Columbus Blue Jackets as well as 20 International teams.

Kessen - This game is the first DVD title for the PlayStation 2. Kessen, which means "strategic battle," is a real-time strategy game based on the Warring States period of seventeenth century Japan.

XSquad - The first squad-based 3-D action shooter. Set in the year is 2037, the XSquad is ordered to investigate a terrorist attack at one of the government's secret military complexes and recover any and all secret material they seized.

Swing Away Golf - A role-playing golf game that isn't just about whether you can make par; it's a full-fledged fun golf experience. Players choose from seven distinct characters with varying golf skill levels, and a specific golf caddie loaded with different strategies depending on the caddie's personality and expertise.

EA Will Deliver a Wide Array of PlayStation 2 Titles Through March 2001

EA expects to ship an incredible lineup of games by March of 2001. Some of those titles include:

FIFA 2001 - Another EA title that's expected to be a top-seller worldwide. FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer will include more than 50 National teams and 17 different leagues. The sights and sounds of the soccer environment come to life in FIFA 2001 Major League Soccer and define the interactive on-field soccer experience.

NBAfi Live 2001 - This hoops game allows the player to control the post or fly high above the rim with many new moves and features. With all-new player reactions and bench sequences, redesigned commentary, and crowd animations, the stadium comes alive.

Tiger Woods PGA TOUR 2001 - Will be the most realistic and graphically compelling interactive golf title on any console. Players don't just play golf, they live the experience in six competitive modes. Through a visually stunning 3-D game engine, authentic golf ball physics and real-time analog swing, game players can fully experience golf with all of its thrills and challenges. Players can compete as or against top PGA TOUR pros including Tiger Woods, Justin Leonard, Brad Faxon, Robert Damron, Stewart Cink and Mark Calcavecchia on the exclusively licensed Pebble Beach Golf Linksfi.

Triple Play 2002 - Whether you step to the plate and face the computer-generated Artificial Intelligence or go head-to-head against your best friend, Triple Play 2002 will challenge and entertain from the first pitch to the final out. Major League Baseball (MLB) and MLBPA licenses give game players all the teams and players in the major leagues. Baseball's storied history comes alive with legendary players such as Babe Ruth, Willie Mays, and Ted Williams.

NASCAR2001 - Dominate at Daytona in the toughest, most compelling racing game on PlayStation 2. Compete for the NASCAR championship against 34 NASCAR drivers who model real-life tendencies and abilities. Hit the track with full car damage, big wrecks, and fender-to-fender excitement.

Knockout Kings 2001- Go toe-to-toe with legendary champions including Muhammad Ali, Lennox Lewis, Oscar De La Hoya, and Sugar Ray Leonard in the only real boxing game on PlayStation 2. Full body scanning replicates each boxer in unprecedented detail. Knockout Kings 2001 also features some of the best female boxers in the world along with current stars and legendary fighters.

F1 Championship Season 2000 - Experience the passion and pressure of Formula One competition with all the real drivers and tracks of the world's leading open wheel motorsport. F1 Championship Season 2000 features stunning graphics including uniquely modeled cars from the 2000 season and distinct driver helmets. Every detail is authentic, from car physics and suspension to the actual grid lineups of the 2000 season. The excitement intensifies as cars now flip, spin, and crash making the damage look so real even the paintwork is stripped from the car.

Theme Park Roller Coaster - Build your own theme park from the ground up and manage everything from salting the fries to determining the height of rides. Build a blood-curdling five-loop roller coaster and dare your customers to climb aboard, or risk your own neck and go for a ride. Take a stroll through your park and explore your creation from the visitor's perspective. Then, visit the sideshows and play the mini-games.

EA's PlayStation 2 games releasing this month carry an ESRB rating of ``E" (Everyone) except Kessen and XSquad, which carry a ``T" (Teen).

Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. to Launch
Four Games for Sony's Highly Anticipated
PlayStation2 by October 31

Smuggler's Run, Midnight Club, Q-Ball: Billiards
Master, and Surfing H30 to Ship During
PlayStation2 Launch Week

Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. is proud to announce that it will ship 4 new products for Sony Computer Entertainment America's highly anticipated PlayStation2 computer entertainment system, which is scheduled to hit retail shelves in the United States on October 26, within a week of the systems launch.

"Our software has the opportunity to aid in defining the success of PlayStation 2," said Sam Houser, President of Take-Two's Rockstar Games. "Smuggler's Run and Midnight Club: Street Racing are games that will show consumers what PlayStation 2 can technically achieve. Our development teams have been working for over a year to ensure that our Company is well represented at the launch of PlayStation 2, and we are very pleased with what is most certainly the strongest publishing launch in Take-Two and Rockstar's history."

Smuggler's Run (which appears on the cover of this month's PSM magazine and is amongst many trade press editor's "Must Buy" PlayStation 2 launch titles) as well as Midnight Club: Street Racing have been manufactured and will be on retail shelves on October 26. Shortly thereafter, the Company will ship Surfing H30 and Q-Ball: Billiards Master, both of which the Company expects will be the first titles available to consumers representing their respective genres.

Looking forward the Company's significant investment in PlayStation 2 development is expected to yield at least a further ten original PlayStation 2 titles within the next twelve months. The highly anticipated Oni is expected to ship in January, followed by an additional nine games by October 31, 2001, including an addition to the Company's best-selling Grand Theft Auto series, and games featuring the renowned Duke Nukem and Austin Powers characters.

Paul Eibeler, President, stated, "We believe that Take-Two and its Rockstar Games subsidiary will enjoy one of the most significant positions amongst third party software publishers at the launch of PlayStation 2 in the United States. Our PlayStation 2 line-up from system launch through Christmas 2001 will define our Company and is a mark of the tremendous strides our video game publishing program has made in the past twelve months. We are thrilled to be in such a roll for what promises to be one of the most exciting consumer electronics launches of modern times."

The Company expects an identical publishing schedule for the launch week of PlayStation 2 in Europe, which commences on November 23.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

MP3.com Agrees to Licensing Deal

The National Music Publishers' Association Inc. and MP3.com Inc. have reached a preliminary settlement that will make more than 1 million musical compositions available on the popular My.MP3.com.

The three-year agreement calls for MP3.com to pay up to \$30 million to the association's licensing unit, Harry Fox Agency Inc., MP3.com said Wednesday.

The publishing association had sued MP3.com in March over the use of its members' songs through My.MP3.com, an Internet service allowing users to listen to music from CDs they already own or which they purchase from MP3.com's retail partners.

If the settlement is approved by individual HFA music publisher-principals, NMPA will drop the lawsuit.

"The Internet has certainly posed many difficult music publishing issues and this agreement ... is a giant step for all consumers who want to simply be able to listen to music they already own," Robin Richards, president of MP3.com, said in a statement.

Edward P. Murphy, president and chief executive of NMPA, called the agreement a win for music creators, Internet music service providers and consumers.

"We believe that our negotiations with MP3.com have yielded a landmark proposal that NMPA can refer to the music publishing and songwriting community with confidence and enthusiasm," Murphy said.

The NMPA, which has more than 700 members, works to protect and advance the interests of the music publishing industry.

Sony Unveils New-Look VAI0 Laptop PCs

Sony Corp on Monday unveiled a new series of its VAI0 personal computers -- the latest effort by the electronics giant to integrate its consumer electronics, PC, and media empire.

Sony's two new notebook computers, formally launched on Monday, mark a clear departure from its current line of PCs.

One is a new VAI0 laptop with a radically new translucent design that sets itself apart from the purple-gray VAI0 PCs.

The other blurs the line between digital handheld camcorders and mini PCs, and is designed specifically to record and broadcast video clips. It also uses a new type of processor.

Previously, Sony had only released preliminary prototypes of the PCs, which will be sold in Japan from mid-November.

"We've designed a new series of VAIOs to better reflect customer preferences for design," said Keiko Iijima of Sony's marketing division for information technology products.

The newly designed VAIO QR (PCG-QR1/BP) sheds the magnesium-gray outer shell seen on its conventional line of laptops and adopts a blue-black translucent plastic surface that is so dark it is almost opaque.

And with a light gray aluminium pipe surrounding the outer edges connecting into fold-out handle, it is reminiscent of Apple Computer's iBook laptop.

The aim is the same -- to make laptops a fashion statement as much as portable personal and business information tools.

Japan's PC manufacturers have been working hard at increasing their appeal to a wider audience. Hitachi Ltd has a series of desktops with a milky-white translucent shell.

Inside, the VAIO QR is pretty much the same as its predecessors. It is equipped with a 13.3 inch flat-panel screen, CD-ROM, and the usual array of ports for peripherals.

The new VAIO is expected to retail for around \$1,850, the lower end of its price range for notebook PCs. No plans are in place yet for a wider choice of colors, Sony said.

Sales are to begin in the latter half of November.

The VAIO GT (PCG-GT1), on the other hand, could be mistaken for a video camcorder, with a large video lens unit attached to its side. Both the video lens unit and the display can be rotated 180 degrees.

Inside, the VAIO GT uses Transmeta Corp's Crusoe chip, which conserves laptop battery life by using software to perform many functions previously reserved for hardware.

The new lens-equipped laptop will have a battery life of up to 17 hours, depending on battery size and usage.

The VAIO GT is expected to retail for around \$2,785, and will come with software that will allow users to make live "personal broadcasts" through an Internet connection and a designated Web-site.

Handspring Unveils Color Organizers

Recognizing the world is not just shades of gray, Handspring Inc. is rolling out Visor Prism, a color-screen model that extends its popular electronic organizer line.

While acknowledging arriving late to the game with a color model against such competitors as the Palm IIIc and the iPac Pocket PC from Compaq Computer, Handspring executives contended the 16-bit, \$449 Visor Prism will be the best on the market, capable of producing more than 65,000 colors.

That's more than sixteen times better than its closest competitor and likely will drive new development of software applications for the Visor's Springboard add-on slot, capable of turning the organizer into an Internet-access device, gaming console or electronic book.

"This is the most advanced display on the market, in a handheld computer," said Ed Colligan, a Handspring senior vice president. "We think that not only with the display, but with Springboard ... this will bring new color applications to the table and make for a very nice user experience."

Analysts say providing a color option to consumers will be essential in coming months as competing companies position their personal digital assistants, or PDAs, as something more than storage devices for names, addresses and calendar functions.

Visor, which licenses the Palm operating system, has become a popular alternative because of the Springboard expansion slot. Add-on slots now coming to market can turn it into everything from a digital camera to a cellular phone to a MP3 player.

The Prism is 1.5 ounces heavier than its Visor monochrome counterparts, at 6.9 ounces but comes with a faster, 33 megahertz processor. The Prism also includes a built-in lithium ion rechargeable battery, a requirement because color screens drain batteries faster. The battery lasts about six hours in continuous use, or two weeks for occasional use before needing a charge in the docking cradle.

Images from a short video clip, a cartoon and a game running on the new Visor Prism all were crisp, showing remarkable detail. The device also remained cool to the touch, giving off none of the heat common to some Pocket PC models.

Still, competition in the market is increasing.

Sony is expected to release a color handheld sometime next year. And, to remind consumers its product is still out there, Palm announced that effective Monday it is dropping the price of the Palm IIIc to \$329 from \$399.

A Palm promotion scheduled to run through Jan. 8 also tosses in free goodies, including three color styli, a luggage tag and a software CD containing games, an electronic book reader, drawing program and reminder functions.

Palm's IIIc has been panned by some analysts because it can show only a meager 256 different colors at a time, which makes some photographs look a bit grainy. The 12-bit iPac and other Pocket PC products support slightly more than 4,000 colors.

Pocket PC products have the advantage of providing greater processing power, a voice recorder and built-in MP3 player functions.

Handspring also began selling Visor Platinum, a \$299 silver model that also boosts the processing power to 33 megahertz and slightly boosts the monochrome picture quality.

The White House is pressing Congress to soften an initiative that would require schools and libraries to use filtering software to keep children from seeing objectionable Internet sites. It suggests that such decisions be left to local authorities.

Polls show Americans want children protected from Web smut, however, and Republicans in Congress are leaving little room for change. They note the legislation has bipartisan support.

"Everyone in the House supports this," said John Albaugh, chief of staff for Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., one of the measure's sponsors. "I don't believe that this is an item that anyone's going to move on in the House."

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., a co-sponsor of the effort, also was defiant.

"I will fight any effort by the Clinton-Gore White House to defeat or weaken this legislation designed to protect the innocence of our children," McCain said in a statement Friday.

The legislation is attached to a federal spending bill Congress must pass before adjourning.

The White House is pressing to change the language that mandates filters in public libraries and schools and to let communities choose the best way to protect their children. Vice President Al Gore supports the White House position.

"We would favor requiring schools and libraries to develop their own plans," White House spokesman Elliot Diringer said. "We think it should be left to the community's discretion."

As an example, Diringer said communities could use either parental volunteers or technology to monitor children's online activity.

White House officials said, however, if the bill arrives on Clinton's desk with the filter requirement unchanged, the president probably would sign it because it includes money for other education priorities.

If signed, the law would require communities to install Internet filtering software in schools and libraries to block out World Wide Web sites with explicit images, hate speech or other objectionable content. If they failed to do so, the institutions would get no federal money for Internet access.

A congressional advisory commission on preventing child pornography also weighed in Friday, declining to endorse or advise against such filters although it expressed some reservations about the technology.

"This technology raises First Amendment concerns because of its potential to be overinclusive in blocking content," said the report by the Child Online Protection Act commission. "Concerns are increased because the extent of blocking is often unclear and not disclosed, and may not be based on parental choices."

The commission advocated an alternative education campaign to tell parents about online dangers and how to protect their children including by personal use of filters. It also urged more money for law enforcement agencies to prosecute online obscenity and child pornography.

The issue of protecting children from objectionable content has emerged in the campaign.

In Tuesday's final presidential debate, Gov. George W. Bush backed mandatory filtering while Gore said he preferred simpler ways for parents to monitor children's online visits.

A survey released this week from the Digital Media Forum indicated 92 percent of 1,900 Americans believe pornography should be blocked on school computers and 79 percent say hate speech should be filtered.

The American Civil Liberties Union said Friday it would file a legal challenge against the filtering requirement if it passes Congress in its current form.

Web Site To Offer Campus Crime Stats

A new federal Web site will offer crime statistics from 6,700 colleges and universities - as soon as half the schools submit the figures.

The Tuesday deadline for schools to report campus crime statistics to the Department of Education Web site was extended by a week after the site crashed. Most schools tried to send the data in at the last minute.

As of Thursday, figures for 3,380 schools were posted.

While many colleges and universities already include crime statistics on their own Web sites, the federal site allows comparisons in three dozen categories through the end of 1999.

The Web site is the product of a law passed after the 1986 murder of 19-year-old Jeanne Clery, a student at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa. Fellow student Joseph M. Henry, who entered the dorm through security doors propped open by pizza boxes, was convicted and sentenced to death.

Clery's parents later learned that 38 violent crimes had not been made public in the three years before her death.

The original law required campuses to compile annual reports of campus crimes, but the rules were toughened and each unreported crime now can draw a fine of \$25,000.

Campus police leaders supported the original law but say the amendments have bogged down their departments in data reporting.

"These unfunded mandates divert money and time away from our primary purpose of fighting crime," said Jim Fadenrecht, police chief at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Fadenrecht also complained that the Education Department doesn't present crime statistics in a per-capita format, making comparisons difficult.

Massachusetts Takes Step for Laptops

Education leaders endorsed a plan Tuesday that would make Massachusetts the first state to require full-time public college students to own a laptop computer.

The Board of Higher Education approved the policy as part of a \$123 million program aimed at wedding high-tech skills to higher education and giving the poor better access to technology.

The proposal still requires legislative approval, which may prove difficult amid concern over whether other programs will be ignored.

''It doesn't do any good to have laptops if you have buildings leaking - which we do," said Michael Widmer of the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation.

Several schools in the country already require computer ownership, including the University of Florida, Ohio University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. But Massachusetts would be the first state to make laptop ownership a systemwide requirement.

There are 176,000 students in the state's university system, full and part time. About 70 percent of students at four-year colleges now have their own computers, board vice chancellor Jack Warner said.

The plan would provide \$54 million for laptop purchases, vouchers for low-income students and loans, plus \$69 million for faculty training, facilities, equipment and academic programs.

The plan comes as the state's need for high-tech workers is growing. Between 1989 and 2000, the number of high-tech jobs has grown from 46,000 to 164,000.

Dan Santella, 21, a senior at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, praised the plan's goals but has no desire to own a laptop.

''I think laptops are great," he said. ''But I'd rather have a TA (teacher's assistant) in some of my classes than a laptop."

Grace Carolyn-Brown, president of Roxbury Community College, said the plan will give the poor greater access to high-tech tools. She said the school's computer facilities are always packed, reflecting the students' restricted access to computers. The school is located in one of Boston's poorest neighborhoods.

''It's a great, great opportunity," she said.

The Paperless Office, Take Six

Sure, you've heard it before. But the successor to paper just might be lurking in a downloaded e-book.

One of the few expectations not fulfilled by PCs is that of the paperless office. In fact, the use of paper has proliferated, as fax machines, copiers, and inkjet and laser printers crank out replications of seemingly every article, memo, or image ever created.

Though there's plenty of content produced only as Web pages (no paper),

many users still print copies of the pages! Paperless diehards can take comfort in the latest craze: e-books. Here's a phenomenon so oversold in the media that I'm beginning to think there might be something to it.

Note, too, what Amazon.com's Jeff Bezos said of e-books recently: "It's possible to invest too early in industries and have it be a disaster." This from the guy whose promise to sell books on the Web so dazzled investors that Amazon's market value went to the moon. When you hear yesterday's innovators bad-mouth the new kid on the block, take note. E-books could make Amazon a dinosaur. On the other hand, also consider that Amazon is implementing its own e-book store.

Before you toss that antique print library into the bonfire, though, remember the caveats: copyrights, encryption, display technology, and convenience.

Looming behind the e-book phenomenon is the specter of MP3 audio and Napster music sharing. Napster may well be shut down by the time you read this, but similar efforts without a central coordinating site could be harder to defeat.

Precedents established with tape recorders and VCRs held that you could record copyrighted material for your personal use (and that of friends). But suppose your friends are the hundreds of millions of souls with access to the Internet. Can you still share? Every new technology requires new rules, and electronic media is no exception. We'll see a struggle between expectations that Web content is free (consider Britannica.com) and the need for content creators to be paid.

Microsoft jumped into the e-book arena with a vengeance, pushing a consumer-friendly media format that can also be encrypted. Still, it's hard to imagine a format that can't be broken, especially for text. Heck, you could print the book, scan it into a computer, then post it online. For e-books to prosper, legal and technological protections must gain support by users. A level of piracy can be tolerated, as long as it doesn't undercut commercial viability.

But for any of this to matter, people must want electronic books. For now, comparing the best display on a notebook or e-reader to a printed page is a joke. But just as digital imaging has improved to the point where it is about to render film obsolete, display technology will also continue to advance. Steps toward better displays include the recent software announcements of Microsoft's Reader (with ClearType technology) and Adobe's Glassbook reader (capable of rotating text, annotating it, and displaying two pages side by side). Better hardware will help, too, such as Franklin's upcoming release of the eBookMan, a PDA-like device that displays text using Microsoft Reader, reads the text aloud, and plays MP3 files. Even better devices will surely follow.

Publishers McGraw-Hill, Simon & Schuster, and Houghton Mifflin are converting some titles to digital format. Booksellers Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble are cutting deals with publishers and producers of e-readers. In the near future, a wide range of e-books will be available to the public for display on PCs, notebooks, PDAs, and dedicated readers.

As the e-book market grows, sellers must recognize that digital content is cheaper. While a press run of only 10,000 books costs plenty, publishing on the Web costs little. Yet, currently, you get only a couple of dollars' discount on a \$15 or \$20 book bought online.

A postscript on the e-book trend: Developments are underway on electronic paper, which can be folded like a magazine but rewritten, as on a computer screen. Xerox and 3M Corp. announced collaboration last year on mass-produced electronic paper, though at present they can display only white and one other color.

If e-books do take off, an intriguing next step would be magazines made of electronic paper and incorporating Bluetooth technology. Then, you could carry a magazine into your doctor's office, and have it updated instantly through Bluetooth's low-power transmitters. Instead of dragging through 2-year-old copies of Field and Stream, you'd be reading the current issue of your favorite magazine.

The paperless office? Sadly, printing articles, memos, and Web pages will flourish for years to come-though the better search capability of e-books and e-zines should reduce demand for paper. The electronic counterpart to books and magazines will remain less elegant for some time, but the day will come when paper books are a nostalgia item, not for serious reading.

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